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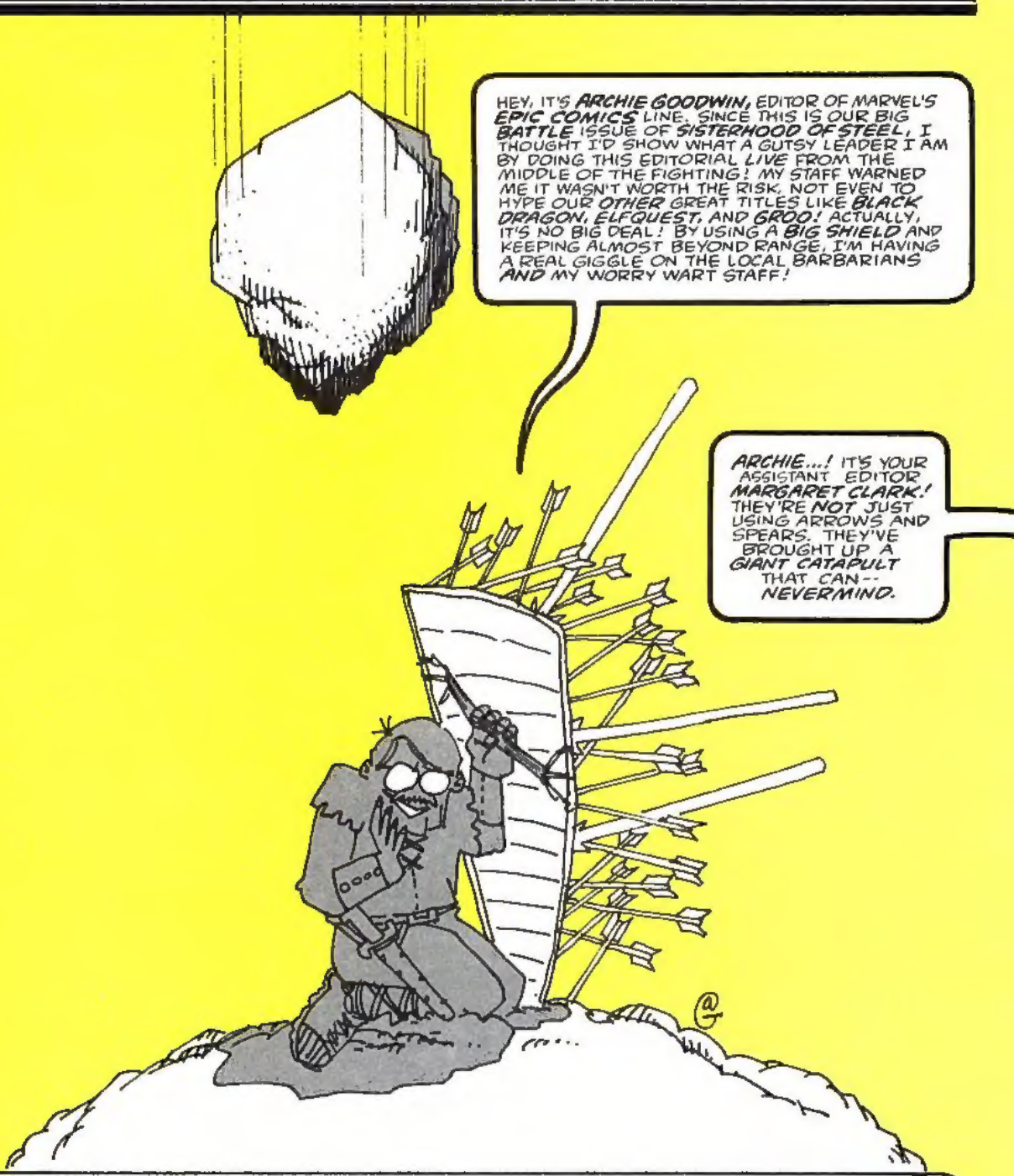

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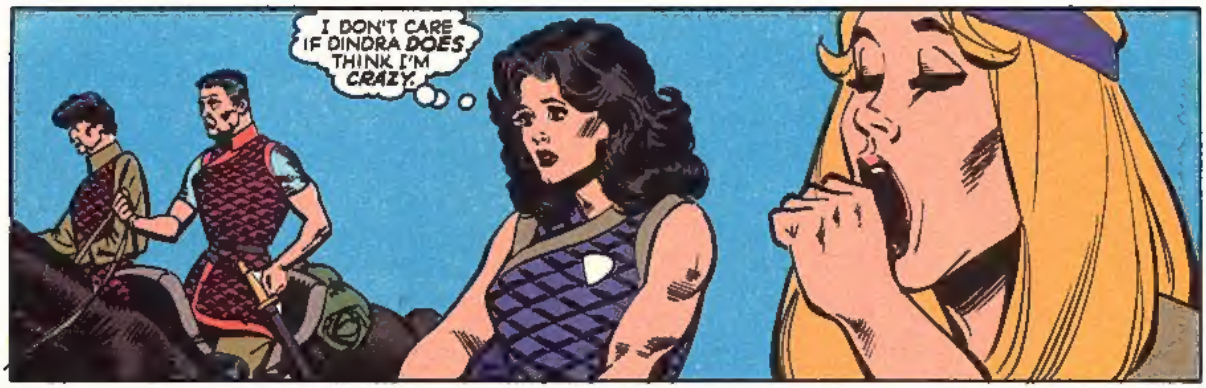
Loyalties

AN ARMY IS ON THE MOVE, RESPONDING TO A CALL FOR HELP FROM NEARBY TRADE TOWNS. WRIGHTWODE AND PROSPER, A COMBINED FORCE OF SOLDIERS FROM ORANGE, PHYRUS AND THE SISTERHOOD MOVE OUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
WHICH, FOR AN ARMY, IS NOT TERRIBLY FAST.
BORONWÉ AND DINDRA UN-ACCOUNTABLY FIND THEM-SELVES RIDING IN POSITIONS OF HONOUR, DIRECTLY BEHIND COMMANDERS GLESPA AND TEEJE.
AND AS IN THE GROWING WARMTH OF AN EARLY SUMMER DAY, EVERYONE HAS TIME FOR REFLECTION.


I DON'T CARE IF DINDRA *DOES* THINK I'M *CRAZY*.

I'M CONVINCED THERE'S A *CONSPIRACY* AGAINST ME. WHY ELSE WOULD COMMANDER GLESPA PAY SO MUCH ATTENTION TO ME? SHE *WATCHES* ME, *TESTS* ME ALL THE TIME.
AND NOW, HERE WE ARE, RIDING AT THE *HEAD* OF THE OFFICERS' COLUMN. THERE'S NO REASON FOR A PAIR OF YOUNG SISTERS LIKE *US* TO BE HERE!

"THEN THERE WAS THE OTHER NIGHT. WHEN I RAN INTO VANDALIS, THE NIGHT THE MESSENGER ARRIVED FROM WRIGHTWODE."
I WANT NO ONE TO KNOW MY PRESENCE HERE YET. YOU'RE FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK OF IT.
UNDERSTOOD, MY LADY.

I WON'T NEED YOU TONIGHT, *CADET*. YOU'RE DISMISSED.
WITH ALL RESPECT, MY LADY, I'M NOT A CADET ANY LONGER. I'VE BEEN GIVEN *WARRIOR* STATUS.

"SHE DIDN'T SAY ANOTHER WORD. BUT I HEARD HER *SHARP INTAKE* OF BREATH AND CAUGHT THE *GLITTER* IN HER EYES. SHE *HATES* ME.

DAMN YOU, VANDALIS. NO MATTER HOW SMOOTH THE WATERS ARE, YOU'LL FIND A WAY TO MUDDY THEM UP. LIKE SHOWING UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT *UNANNOUNCED*. GILL WAS PRETTY MAD!
I DON'T BLAME HER.
EVERY MOVE MUST BE *CAREFULLY* CONSIDERED WHEN DEALING WITH PRINCE O'MAH.
YOU *CAN'T* SIMPLY--
I WILL REMIND YOU COMMANDER GILL, THAT I AM STILL YOUR *SUPERIOR OFFICER*, AND I HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO APPEAR WHEN AND WHERE I CHOOSE WHEN THE *SECURITY* OF THE SISTERHOOD IS *THREATENED*.
AND I REMIND YOU, PRINCESS, THAT I HAVE DIRECT AUTHORITY FROM THE QUEEN HERSELF TO HANDLE THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ORANGE *WITHOUT INTERFERENCE!*
HOW DARE YOU CALL THE *CONCERN* OF THE PRINCESS OF SWORDS "*INTERFERENCE!*" WE'RE DEALING WITH *GIAOURANS*, WHICH MAKES THIS A *MILITARY* MATTER, AND THAT *MAKES* IT MY BUSINESS!
WE HAD ANOTHER MATTER OF GREAT *URGENCY* TO DEAL WITH! WE'VE JUST GOTTEN A MESSAGE FROM CELIA AT WRIGHTWODE! KARKOR HAS BEEN RAZED BY BARBARIANS FROM THE MOUNTAINS, AND PROSPER IS COMING UNDER *SIEGE!* THEY NEED HELP AND THEY NEED IT NOW!
BARBARIANS? I THOUGHT WE'D PUSHED THEM BACK BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS?

EVIDENTLY, NOT FAR ENOUGH! CELIA FEARS THIS IS ONLY THE FIRST WAVE!
I'M HEADING UP THE REINFORCEMENT FORCE MYSELF AND MOVING OUT THE MINUTE ORANGE AND PHYRUS GET THEIR FORCES TOGETHER.
AN EXCELLENT IDEA! EXCUSE US A MOMENT, COMMANDERS.
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, VAN?
THE CADET--THE SISTER, BORONWE. HAVE YOU--?
I'VE CHECKED HER OUT, BUT I HAVE OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT, Y'KNOW, LIKE RUNNING THE POST.
THIS CAMPAIGN IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY. TAKE HER WITH YOU AND KEEP HER CLOSE BY. PUSH HER! SHE'S BOUND TO MAKE A MISTAKE IN BATTLE. I'M SURE OF THIS GIRL'S TREASONOUS FEELINGS FOR THE SISTERHOOD! PROVE IT FOR ME! YOU'LL BE DOING A GREAT SERVICE, ONE I WON'T FORGET.
I TRUST YOU UNDERSTAND MY NEEDS?
YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT... PRINCESS.

WELL, IT'S GILL'S PROBLEM, NOW. I'M GLAD I'M OUT OF THE CITY! IT'S BEEN TOO LONG BETWEEN BATTLES.
MAYBE BORONWË'S RIGHT! I HAD MY DOUBTS YESTERDAY, BUT TODAY I WONDER.
I CAN'T FIND MY OTHER DAGGER. DID YOU SEE IT?
DINDRA, I WANT YOU TO KNOW... BEING MY SWORDMATE COULD MEAN A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR YOU.
SO, IF YOU WANT TO REQUEST A TRANSFER..
AW, C'MON! YOUR IMAGINATION'S ACTING UP AGAIN! YOU'RE NOT GETTING RID OF ME THAT EASILY!
YOU'VE GOT ONE MINUTE TO FINISH PACKING! JOIN YOUR COLUMN IN THE NORTH COURTYARD.
BORONWË AND DINDRA, YOU'RE TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO COMMANDER GLESPA.
YOU'LL BE RIDING IN HER COLUMN!
YES, CAPTAIN!
THERE'S ALWAYS THE CHANCE GLESPA IS WATCHING ME, BUT THAT'S PRETTY UNLIKELY. WHICH MEANS BORONWË ISN'T EXAGGERATING! I WISH I KNEW WHAT TO DO!

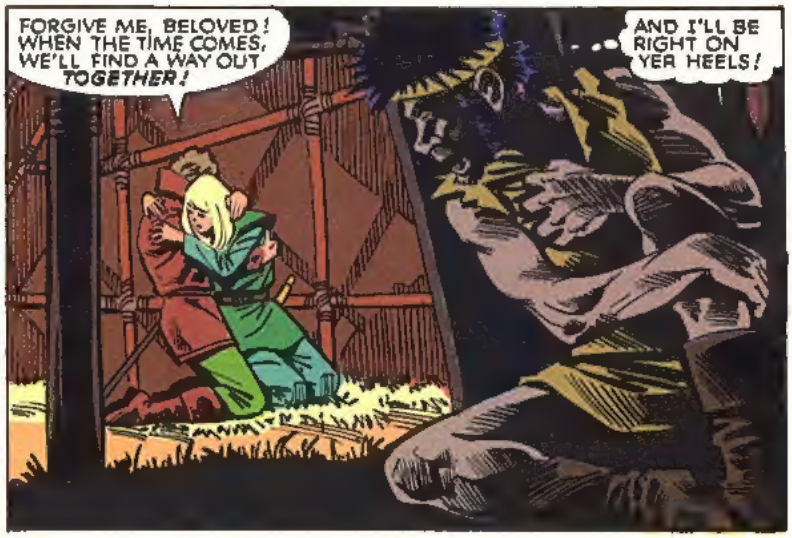
THE BARBARIANS HAVE LAID SIEGE TO PROSPER, BUT THEY ARE IMPATIENT TO TAKE THIS CITY AND EAGER TO REPLENISH THEIR OWN RESERVES FROM PROSPER'S LARDERS.
DAY AFTER DAY, THEY THROW THEMSELVES AGAINST THE WALLS!
TERRIFIED CIVILIANS MEET THEM WITH THE FEROCITY BORN OF DESPERATION!
NEESA! WE CAN'T HOLD THEM!
GET THAT OIL UP HERE!

THE BOILING OIL DRIVES THE BARBARIANS DOWN AND DESTROYS MANY OF THEIR LADDERS... BUT IT IS ONLY A RESPITE!
AUUGH!
GUGHAHH!

YOSSE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THAT'S THE LAST OF THE OIL! NOTHING WILL STOP THEM NEXT TIME! AND YOU'RE EXHAUSTED! YOU CAN BARELY HOLD UP YOUR SWORD!

THE CITY IS DOOMED, KELKI, BUT WE'RE NOT GOING DOWN WITH IT, UNLESS YOUR DAMNED LOYALTY TO THE SISTERHOOD IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ME!
THAT ISN'T TRUE! YOU KNOW IT ISN'T!

HOW COULD YOU DOUBT THAT I LOVE YOU?


FORGIVE ME, BELOVED! WHEN THE TIME COMES, WE'LL FIND A WAY OUT TOGETHER!
AND I'LL BE RIGHT ON YER HEELS!

THE RELIEF ARMY HAS FINALLY COME WITHIN REACH OF PROSPER.
THEY CAMP WHERE THE BARBARIANS WILL NOT SEE THEM AND SEND OUT SCOUTS TO LINK UP WITH THE SISTERHOOD FORCES FROM WRIGHTWODE.
THINK OF THE POOR WOMEN IN PROSPER!
IF WE'RE TOO LATE, THEY'LL BE RAPED AND KILLED!
I TELL YOU, I'D RATHER DIE IN BATTLE THAN HAVE SOME STINKING, HAIRY BARBARIAN LAY A HAND ON ME!
ME, TOO! I HOPE I NEVER DIE WITHOUT A BLADE IN MY HAND!
YOU HAVEN'T SAID MUCH, BORONWÉ.
YES. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT?

IT SEEMS TO ME, MILADY, THAT HOW WE DIE ONLY MATTERS WHILE WE'RE ALIVE, BUT DEATH IS DEATH, NO MATTER HOW IT COMES.
COMMANDER! SCOUT RETURNING!
TEEJE! THAT WAS QUICK!
CELIA'S NOT FAR FROM HERE. LET'S GO INSIDE
GENERALS, TEEJE HAS LOCATED CAPTAIN CELIA'S FORCE FROM WRIGHTWODE.
DOES PROSPER STILL STAND?
ONLY JUST, AND THE BARBARIANS HAVE KEPT CAPTAIN CELIA FROM BREAKING THROUGH TO RELIEVE THE CITY.
SHE'S SURE THE ENEMY PLANS A MAJOR ATTACK *TOMORROW*, NOW THAT THEY KNOW THE SISTERHOOD IS IN THE AREA!
THEN LET'S GRAB WHAT REST WE CAN! WE'LL MOVE OUT AT DAWN!

THE BREAK OF DAWN.
NEESA IS JARRED FROM EXHAUSTED SLUMBER BY...
GODDESS! THE GATES!
YIEEE! THE GATES ARE BROKEN! RUN!
NO, DAMN IT, DON'T PANIC!
TO THE CENTER! FIGHTERS TO THE FRONT!
SHIELDS UP IF YOU HAVE THEM! WE MUST HOLD THEM HERE, UNTIL HELP COMES!
HOLD YOUR POSITIONS! LET THEM COME TO US!
MIGHTY RAM OF EL! DON'T LET THEM FIND ME!

CAVALRY! RIDE!

TO THE DEATH!

THE WAR HORNS OF ORANGE AND PHYRUS ECHO FROM THE SURROUNDING ROCKS!

THEY'VE BROKEN THROUGH, GLESPA!

I SEE IT! SIGNAL, CELIA!

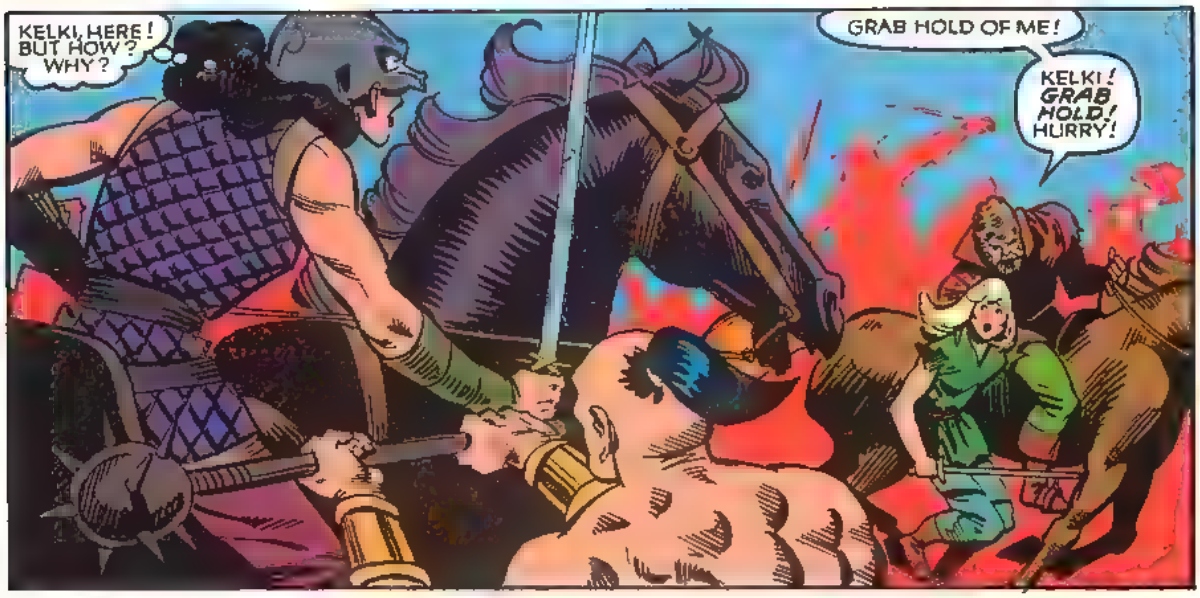
ALERTED BY THE HORNS, CELIA **CHARGES** FROM HER POSITION, JOINING UP WITH THE FORCES UNDER GLESPA TO FORM AN UNBROKEN RING OF **STEEL** WHICH **PRESSES** THE BARBARIANS AGAINST THE WALLS OF PROSPER!

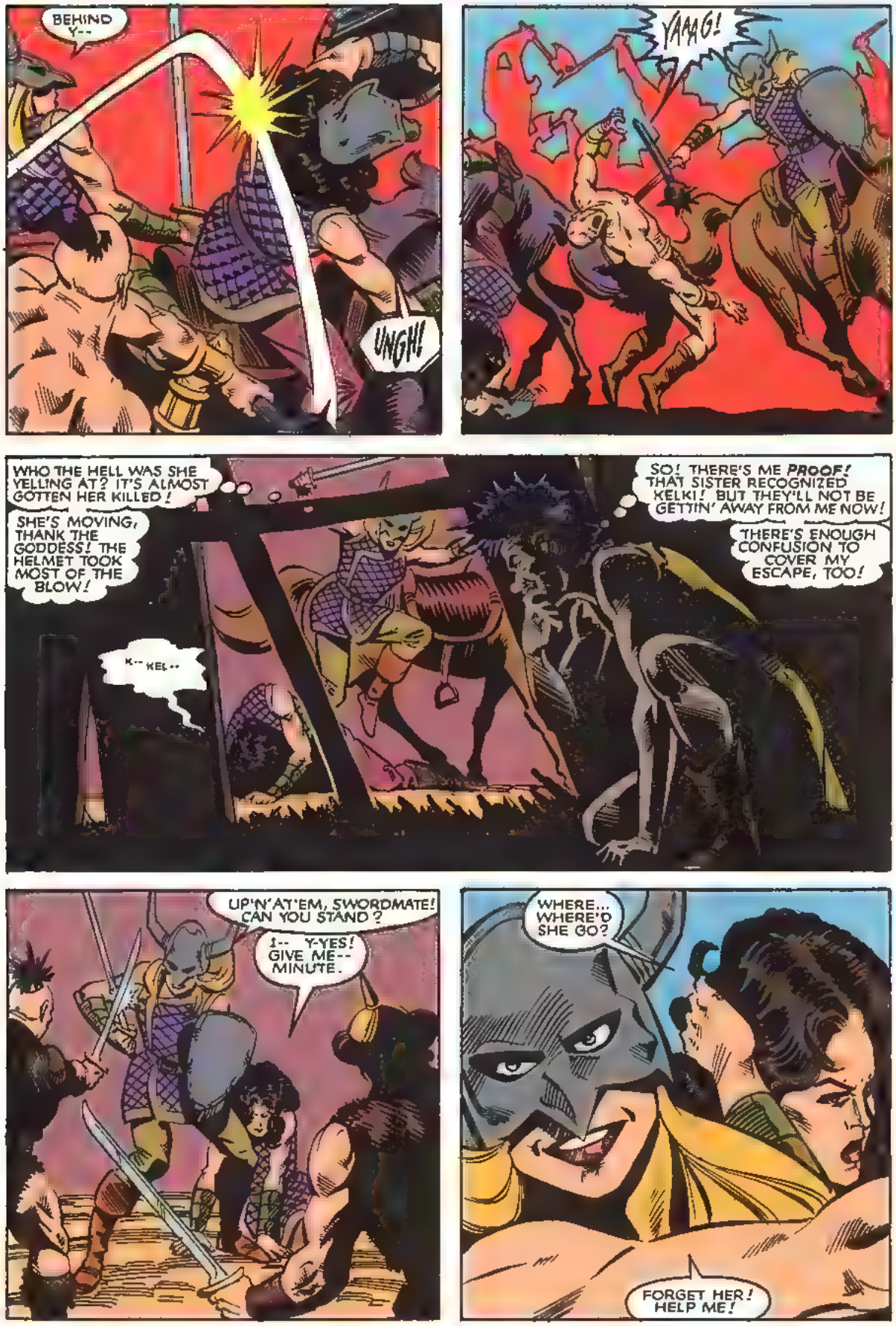
THOSE WHO SLIP THROUGH THIS RING FACE THE COLUMNS OF INFANTRY THAT POUR DOWN FROM THE HILLS BEHIND THE CAVALRY!

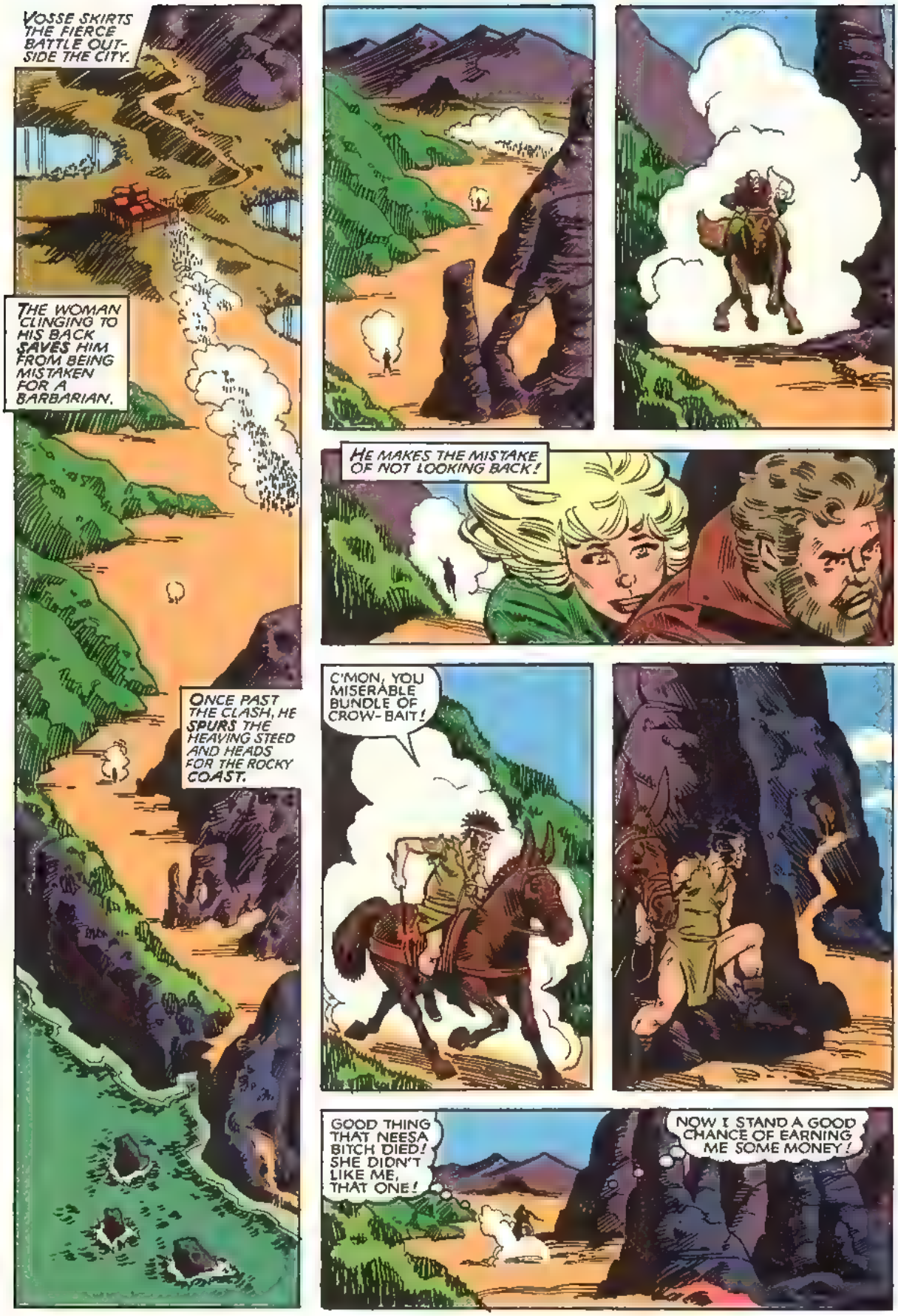
GLESPA'S COLUMN PLUNGES INTO THE CHURNING MASS OF BARBARIANS AT THE GATES!
BO! LOOK! A SISTER ON HER OWN!
MAKE FOR HER!
NEESA, FALL BACK BEFORE--
NO, I CAN HEAR THE HORNS! HELP IS COMING! FIGHT ON!
YOU MADE IT, PAL! BLESS YOUR STUBBORN HIDE! YOU--
GLAAHG!
NOOOOOO!

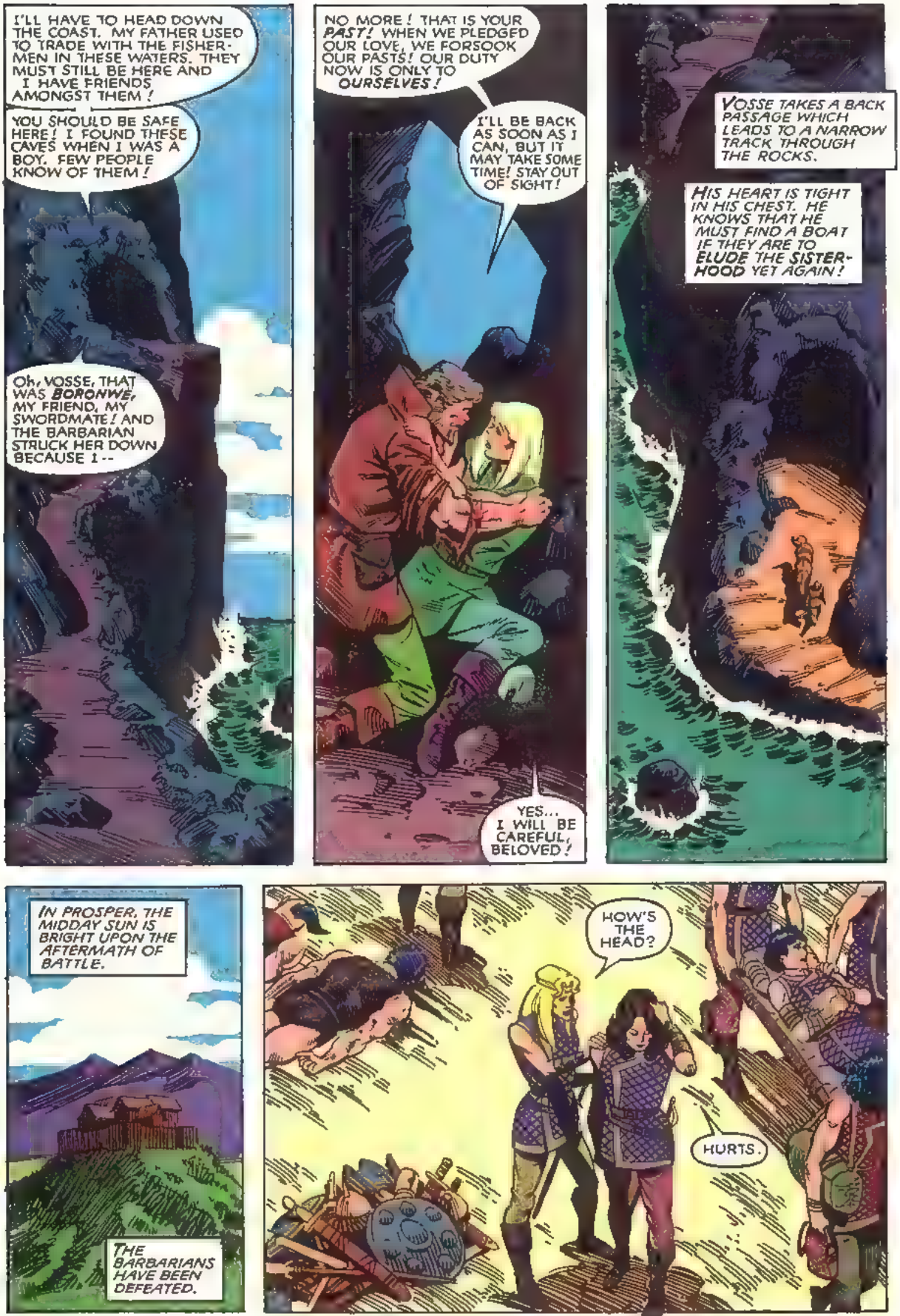
WE-- WE'RE TOO LATE!
KELKI! OVER HERE! THIS IS OUR CHANCE!

KELKI?!
BORONWË!!


KELKI, HERE! BUT HOW? WHY?
GRAB HOLD OF ME!
KELKI! GRAB HOLD! HURRY!


BEHIND Y--
UNGH!
YAAAG!
WHO THE HELL WAS SHE YELLING AT? IT'S ALMOST GOTTEN HER KILLED!
SHE'S MOVING, THANK THE GODDESS! THE HELMET TOOK MOST OF THE BLOW!
K-- KEL--
SO! THERE'S ME PROOF! THAT SISTER RECOGNIZED KELKI! BUT THEY'LL NOT BE GETTIN' AWAY FROM ME NOW!
THERE'S ENOUGH CONFUSION TO COVER MY ESCAPE, TOO!
UP'N'AT'EM, SWORDMATE! CAN YOU STAND?
I-- Y-YES! GIVE ME-- MINUTE.
WHERE... WHERE'D SHE GO?
FORGET HER! HELP ME!


VOSSE SKIRTS THE FIERCE BATTLE OUTSIDE THE CITY.
THE WOMAN CLINGING TO HIS BACK SAVES HIM FROM BEING MISTAKEN FOR A BARBARIAN.
ONCE PAST THE CLASH, HE SPURS THE HEAVING STEED AND HEADS FOR THE ROCKY COAST.
HE MAKES THE MISTAKE OF NOT LOOKING BACK!
C'MON, YOU MISERABLE BUNDLE OF CROW-BAIT!
GOOD THING THAT NEESA BITCH DIED! SHE DIDN'T LIKE ME, THAT ONE!
NOW I STAND A GOOD CHANCE OF EARNING ME SOME MONEY!


I'LL HAVE TO HEAD DOWN THE COAST. MY FATHER USED TO TRADE WITH THE FISHERMEN IN THESE WATERS. THEY MUST STILL BE HERE AND I HAVE FRIENDS AMONGST THEM!
YOU SHOULD BE SAFE HERE! I FOUND THESE CAVES WHEN I WAS A BOY. FEW PEOPLE KNOW OF THEM!
Oh, VOSSE, THAT WAS BORONWE, MY FRIEND, MY SWORDMATE! AND THE BARBARIAN STRUCK HER DOWN BECAUSE I --
NO MORE! THAT IS YOUR PAST! WHEN WE PLEDGED OUR LOVE, WE FORSOOK OUR PASTS! OUR DUTY NOW IS ONLY TO OURSELVES!
I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I CAN, BUT IT MAY TAKE SOME TIME! STAY OUT OF SIGHT!
YES... I WILL BE CAREFUL, BELOVED!
VOSSE TAKES A BACK PASSAGE WHICH LEADS TO A NARROW TRACK THROUGH THE ROCKS.
HIS HEART IS TIGHT IN HIS CHEST. HE KNOWS THAT HE MUST FIND A BOAT IF THEY ARE TO ELUDE THE SISTERHOOD YET AGAIN!
IN PROSPER, THE MIDDAY SUN IS BRIGHT UPON THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE.
THE BARBARIANS HAVE BEEN DEFEATED.
HOW'S THE HEAD?
HURTS.

DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

ABOUT WHAT?

I KNOW SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED, JUST BEFORE YOU GOT HIT! I DON'T WANT TO PRY--

THEN ***DON'T!***

IF WE'D COME BUT A MOMENT EARLIER...

A MINUTE, AN HOUR. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE, GLESPA. IT WAS HER FATE.

I'M ***SORRY***, DINDRA. MAYBE I ***SHOULD*** TELL YOU--

WHAT THE ***HELL'S*** GOING ON OVER THERE?

COMMANDER, THIS MAN CLAIMS--

IT'S ONE O' YER SISTERS, THAT'S WHAT! A ***RUNAWAY!***

AN' ***SHE*** KNOWS HER! CALLED HER BY NAME-- KELKI!

I SAILED WITH KELKI AND HER MAN. THEY WAS *TERRIFIED* O' MEETIN' UP WITH THE SISTERHOOD. AND WHEN THIS ONE SAW HER IN THE BATTLE, SHE CALLED HER BY NAME AND KELKI CALLED BACK!
THE OTHER TWO RODE OUT AN' I FOLLOWED 'EM. THEY'RE IN A *CAVE* ON THE OCEAN! I CAN TAKE YOU THERE BEFORE THEY GET AWAY!
TAKE OVER! I'M GOING TO CHECK THIS OUT!
CAN'T IT WAIT? ONE RUNAWAY GIRL--
I'VE GOT MY REASONS!
WHATEVER YOU SAY!
I'M TAKING THESE TWO GIRLS! SEND OVER THREE OLDER WOMEN AS WELL!
LET'S GO!
BORONWE HAS NO TIME FOR THOUGHT DURING THE SWIFT, GRIM RIDE TO THE SEA.
SHE'S TOO BUSY PRAYING THAT THIS RATTY LITTLE MAN IS WRONG!

THERE IT BE! THAT'S THE CAVE UP THERE!
AND NOW, IF YE'D HAVE A FEW COINS FOR A POOR EX-SLAVE, I'LL BE ON ME WAY--
YOU'LL BE ON YOUR WAY, ALL RIGHT, YOU SNIVELLING LITTLE BASTARD!
GUH-GUH-GUH...
GET OUT, BEFORE I GUT YOU WHERE YOU STAND!
EL'S CURSES ON YE! MAY YE ALL DIE IN AGONY, YE CHEAP BITCHES!
SHE WAS YOUR SWORDMATE, SO I'LL LET YOU GO *ALONE*. BRING HER BACK UNDER ARREST, WHETHER SHE COMES PEACEABLY OR NOT.
MAKE NO *MISTAKES*, BORONWÉ. I BELIEVE YOU KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE
YES, COMMANDER. I DO.

THE SHADOWS ARE GROWING LONG. WHAT IF HE DOESN'T RETURN BEFORE DARK?
FOOTSTEPS!
NOT VOSSE'S!
AND YET. . I KNOW THAT STEP!
Oh, KELKI, KELKI, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?!
YOU'RE ALIVE! PRAISE BE THE GODDESS!

WHEN I SAW YOU, I THOUGHT MY HEART WOULD STOP! BUT WHERE'S YOUR MAN?
GONE TO FIND A BOAT!
IS HE GOOD TO YOU? DOES HE LOVE YOU?
HE'S EVERYTHING I COULD EVER WANT!
THERE'S SO MUCH I WANT TO TELL YOU AND I'M PREGNANT!
SHATH'S TEETH! ALREADY?
IT DOESN'T SHOW MUCH YET!
WE'VE GOT TO THINK!
GET AWAY FROM HER!
SHE'S MINE! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TAKE HER FROM ME!
VOSSE! STOP!
IF I WANTED TO KILL YOU...
... I'D DO IT AS EASILY AS THIS!
BUT KELKI LOVES YOU, AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME!

DID YOU FIND A BOAT?
UH,, YES. IT'S IN THE LITTLE COVE BEHIND US!
KELKI, YOU'LL HAVE TO BRING IT AROUND BENEATH THE FRONT OF THIS CAVE BY YOURSELF!
I CAN DO IT!
VOSSE, WE'LL HAVE TO BUY HER TIME AND SEND YOU DOWN THE HARD WAY... FROM THE CLIFF!
THE CLIFF?!
THIS IS THE ONLY WAY!
I TRUST YOU, BORONWE! WE'LL DO AS YOU SAY!
THE GODDESS GO WITH YOU!
MY COMMANDER WON'T WAIT MUCH LONGER! SHE'LL SEND SOMEONE AFTER ME!
ARE YOU WILLING TO SUFFER FOR KELKI?
WHAT KIND OF A DAMN QUESTION IS THAT, AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH? OF COURSE!
GOOD! BECAUSE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO HURT YOU!

COMMANDER! SOME-ONE'S COMING OUT!

STAY NEAR THE EDGE! WHEN I CUT LIGHTLY, *SCREAM* AND DIVE FROM THE CLIFF!

LUNGE AT ME! THEY HAVE TO SEE US FIGHTING!

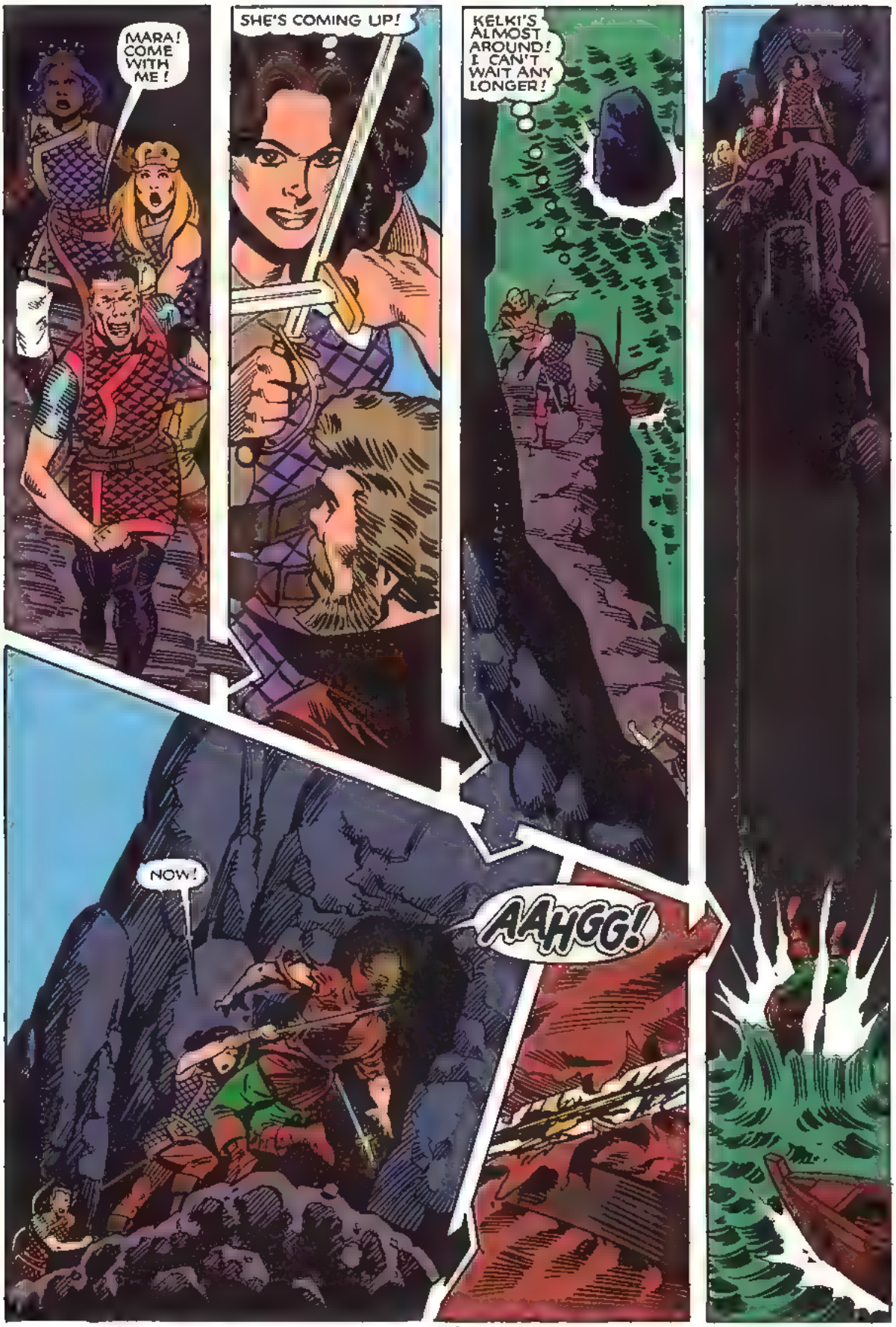
COMMANDER, SHOULD WE--

GIVE IT A MINUTE! I WANT TO *WATCH!*

SHE'S HOLDING BACK! WHY? WHAT'S SHE UP TO?

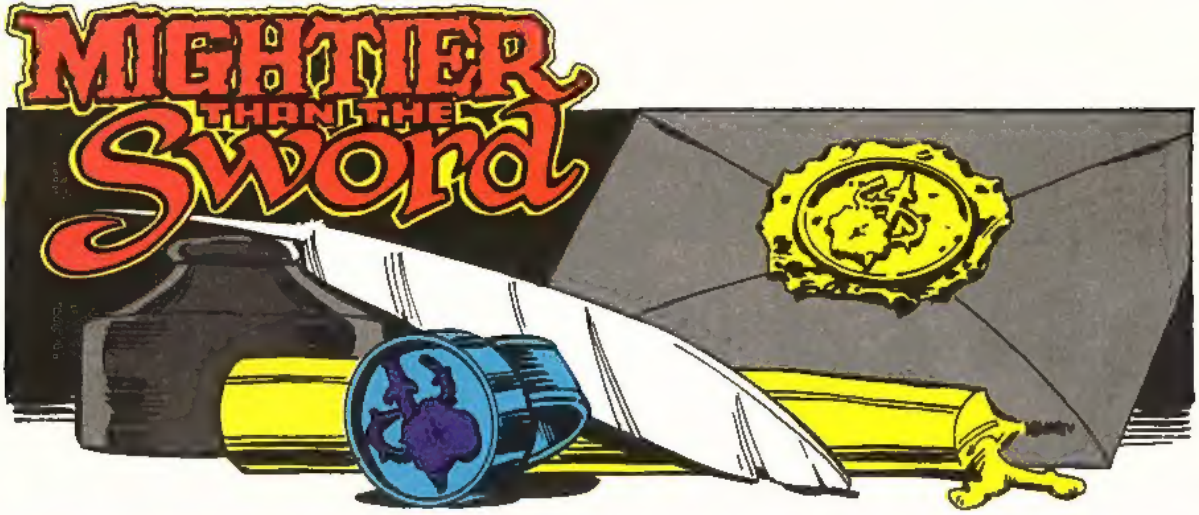
HOW'S THIS?

NOT GOOD ENOUGH! TRY *HARDER!*


MARA! COME WITH ME!
SHE'S COMING UP!
KELKI'S ALMOST AROUND! I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER!
NOW!
AAHGG!

MARA, HAND ME AN ARROW.
STOP THEM BEFORE THEY RAISE SAIL!
AIM TO KILL.
FIRE!

WE'VE CAUGHT THE WIND! BUT... WE'RE STILL IN RANGE!
BY THE GODDESS, THAT'S A COMMAND! FIRE!
GOOD-BYE, KELKI, MY DEAR FRIEND!
GLESPA GIVES NO MORE COMMANDS AS THE TINY CRAFT MOVES SPEEDILY BEYOND ARROW'S REACH!
I WARNED YOU, GIRL!
SISTER BORONWE, YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR TREASON TO THE SISTERHOOD!
TAKE HER WEAPONS!
TO BE CONTINUED...



We'd like to thank Sue Vosburg for her uncredited help in coloring SOS #5. And thanks to Laurie Sutton for her help and support in the editing of the series.

Dear Christy Marx,

Referring to Issue #4, it was great! Especially at the end, when we find out who Elquin really is! Please develop this story further. One thing I don't like though, is Boronwë's portrayal in this issue. She is acting like a slut, more so than she ever has before. The line "I'm no a virgin either" made me sick. Please don't have her getting it on with every guy she meets.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

Justin Probert
Pleasanton, CA

I think Boronwë's shown quite good taste. Based on my own experiences, that special instantaneous attraction that can occur between a man and a woman (not excluding the other combinations) doesn't have to mean that one is promiscuous. Nor was it uncommon, in such ancient times, for girls to be married off by the age of 14 or younger. Our modern world is beset by a lot of different moral values, with too many people interested in imposing their set of values on others. An honest, open approach to sexual relationships is far healthier for society than sexual repression.

Dear Christy and Mike,

Are you a Shakespeare fan Christy? I detect whiffs of *Romeo and Juliet* and some *Taming of the Shrew* in Boronwë and Elquin's relationship. I forsee some very interesting ramifications of their relationship considering their respective backgrounds. I hope no one complains about the fact the Boronwë went off and made love with a man she just met. Mature realistic adults do meet, have instant and mutual attraction and follow through with sex "on the first date" so to speak. She being a soldier and he being in the "sea trade" they can't afford traditional courtships moves and the time that consumes. It was refreshing to see two people in comics have sex without having dated for umpteen years first or the "pick-'em-up-use-'em-dump-'em" barely knowing or caring that is sometimes used to expedite a plot or simply to show how wonderful the "hero" is—he or she has people jumping into bed all the time simply to reinforce the image of attractiveness. (Am I making sense?) I hope this relationship isn't going to be killed off soon. Whether Elquin stays or goes in the long run, and no matter what happens between their meetings, this is an excellent story line.

Tracy Pavey
Victorville, CA

No, I've read little of the Bard, I'm afraid, but the Romeo/Juliet twist is good, basic drama on which no one has exclusivity, not even old Will.

You've summed up very well the points I built into the Boronwë/Elquin romance. As long as she is a Sister, Boronwë is unable to commit to a permanent bond, but there's no reason she shouldn't seek both emotional and physical pleasure when she can find it.

Dear Christy,

From your first issue, I have felt decidedly ambivalent about **Sisterhood of Steel.** I've given this a lot of thought, and decided that there are two reasons for this. The first is that I just can't bring myself to like Mike Vosburg's art. All the sisters look like they've been up all night drinking generic beer, and are paying the price in bloat and flatulance. I think this is a major contributing factor to the second reason, which is that I just can't bring myself to like any of the characters. It is certainly a tribute to your writing skills that I'm still reading the book in spite of this, but the characters are lacking a depth, a human dimension that would make it possible to sympathize with them. I care about the events in the book, but not the people. Perhaps this will change over a few more issues; I hope so, because I like the book otherwise.

Mitchell Paul
Chicago, IL

Let's see if I got this straight ...you don't like the artwork, you don't like the characters...but

you like something because you keep reading it.

Hmmm. Interesting. Confusing, but interesting. I think I know what you mean, because I feel that way about a few of the comics I read as well. Do what I do...keep reading.

Dear Christy and Mike,

Several questions I'd like to ask:

1) Being raised *solely* with other members of the Sisterhood, wouldn't the sisters develop a sort of elitism among themselves? In other words, would the sisters really be likely to go to a bar and socialize with the city folk? Commander Glespa's "let's only be social with other members of the Sisterhood" behavior seems much more likely that Boronwë's "let's join with the crowd outlook."

2) The Sisterhood is sort of a police force for the town of Phyrus. Wouldn't there be "on-duty" sisters patrolling the town and bars maintaining order and keeping fellow sisters out of trouble? Like a modern day army MP would do?

Finally the "stickiest" question of all:

3) Pregnancy for a sister of warrior status is no doubt heavily frowned upon by the Sisterhood. If Elquin and Boronwë engaged in straight intercourse, how would they prevent pregnancy? (Remembering that the story is set in the equivalent of our Dark Ages). Wouldn't the Sisterhood have taught its sisters some form of reliable birth control (assuming there is any) or its heterosexual sisters a "better celibate than pregnant" code of behavior to live by? Or simply taught them that sex for reproductive purposes? I'm sure pregnancy is a major issue for the hierarchy of the Sisterhood and I'd like to see how they deal with it.

Stephen Oliver
Thomaston, ME

1) Yes, and no; there's no doubt of the bond between Sisters, but I don't think that would prevent them from wanting to "go civilian" on occasion. Each Sister is different, but each is still a woman. Both women and warriors need a change of pace.

2) Yes, I agree. They would have the equivalent of MP's, but we simply didn't have room for it in this issue.

3) The Sisters practice birth control using the same kind of device the ancient Egyptians used—the cervical cap—which has been "rediscovered" in recent years and is undergoing study in the U.S. as a simple, safe alternative to modern devices.

The setting isn't the Dark Ages, it's a parallel of Roman and Byzantine times...or somewhere inbetween. (Me? Vague?)

Dear Ms. Marx,

I have just finished **Sisterhood of Steel #4** and I would like to congratulate you on an excellent book. However, something is nagging at me which has caused me to write my first letter to a comic since 1978. Will you please explain to me why a woman of Vandalis's position is so irrationally possessed by the need to destroy Boronwë? I find it to be a poor plot device and the waste of a good character. I am going to guess when I say that I believe that Vandalis is at best, twenty-seven. So unless you intend to blast through, and place Boronwë in a position of great power by this time next year, Vandalis certainly has nothing to fear from her.

Bill Braswell
Bronx, NY

The next two issues will show just how devious Vandalis is. Just as there can be instant attraction between two people, there can also be instant, and unexplained, antagonism. Lanna is both a personal and political enemy to Vandalis, and while Boronwë may not be an immediate threat, there is no telling what kind of threat she could ultimately pose, especially in a military group where death or injury has a way of suddenly rearranging the ranks.

By the time you read this, issue #1 of Scrolls of the Sisterhood will have gone out and #2 will be in the works. The response has been great. If you really hurry and subscribe now ($9.00 for 6 issues), I'll extend the offer of the free poster of the cover of SOS #1 signed by Mike and me. Send to: Christy Marx; P.O. Box 1952; Wrightwood, Ca. 92397.

Meanwhile, keep writing! I want more thoughts, more letters, more questions, more comments of all kinds. If your letter doesn't appear here, it will probably appear in Scrolls. (How's that for cunning enticement?)

Issue #7 is entitled "Vows and Vengences"—Boronwë goes on trial for treason and finally learns how Lanna lost her arm and Vandalis gained her scar. Go with the Goddess!

APPENDIX #5
OFFICERS BY RANK AND UNIFORM

The Sisterhood places less emphasis on titles and more emphasis on personal recognition of one's officer. They see no reason to make a Commander 1st Class so distinctive that she can be instantly picked out by the enemy by uniform alone.

Within Sisterhood jargon, as an example, a Captain 2nd-Class is usually called a "second Captain" or just a "Second."

Cadets are the freshly graduated young Sisters who have not yet had field experience. They remain Cadets for one year. If they survive their first year, they achieve **Sister Warrior** status. In unusual cases, promotions can be given earlier.

Although **Commmanders** are also ranked 4th to 1st class, this is mainly a matter of seniority, or special promotion by the Queen.

Uniforms indicate rank as follows:

Captain 4th Class..... purple tunic/tan trim
Captain 3rd Class ..... purple tunic/red trim
Captain 2nd Class ..... burgundy tunic/tan trim
Captain 1st Class ..... burgundy tunic/red trim
Commanders 4th-1st ..... burgundy tunic/red trim

MILITARY ORGANIZATION

A **Column** is the basic fighting unit, composed of 10 Sisters (5 pairs of swordmates). The 10 Sisters in one column become shieldmates. This is a breakdown of all the land units and their officers:

UNIT	# IN INFANTRY	# IN CAVALRY	OFFICER
Column	10	10	Captain 4th
Squad	250	50	Captain 3rd
Company	500	250	Captain 2nd
Battalion	1,250	500	Captain 1st
Mora*	5,000	1,250	Captain 1st
Division	10,000	2,500	Commander 4th-1st
Army	25,000	5,000	Commander 2nd-1st

*The **Mora** (or morae in the plural) are not regular standing units, but are special units sometimes created in the field, either as a reorganization after losses in an engagement, or for other tactical purposes. They are not permanent.